

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Canceled)

2. (Previously Presented) An endoscope system comprising:

an endoscope having an elongated insertion unit comprising adjoining bending and distal sections; and

a guide member for guiding the insertion unit, the guide member having proximal and distal guide member ends and including a plurality of tubular members having varying outer diameters, each tubular member of the plurality of tubular members having proximal and distal ends, a guide channel of a predetermined inner diameter permitting passage of tubular members having smaller outer diameter and the insertion unit, a predetermined degree of flexibility, a predetermined length, and a direction changing unit operative to change an advancing direction in which tubular members having smaller outer diameter and the insertion unit are advanced through the guide channel, the guide member is adapted to be passed through or placed in a pipe,

wherein the direction changing unit is a distal cover member attachable to the distal end of the tubular member; the distal cover member having a passing direction changing opening formed in a lateral side of the distal cover member; and the passing direction changing opening changes the passing direction, in which the insertion unit is passed, from an axial direction of the tubular member to a lateral direction thereof.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Previously Presented) An endoscope system according to claim 2, wherein the distal cover member attached to the distal end of the tubular member and serving as an extremely distal portion of the insertion unit guide member includes a leading direction adjusting unit for adjusting the leading direction in which the insertion unit is led out of the passing direction changing opening.

5. (Previously Presented) An endoscope system according to claim 4, wherein the leading direction adjusting unit comprises:

a raiser located distally to the passing direction changing opening of the distal cover member; and

an operation wire having a wire distal end fixed to the raiser and a wire proximal end extended towards the proximal guide member end.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Previously Presented) An endoscope system according to claim 5, wherein the tubular member comprises a tube and a braid for sheathing a periphery of the tube; and the operation wire being interposed between the tube and the braid and extended towards the proximal guide member end.

8. – 12. (Canceled)

13. (Currently Amended) An endoscope system comprising:

an endoscope having an elongated insertion unit comprising adjoining bending and distal sections; and

a guide member for guiding the insertion unit, the guide member having proximal and distal guide member ends and including a plurality of tubular members having varying outer diameters, each tubular member of the plurality of tubular members having proximal and distal ends, a guide channel of a predetermined inner diameter permitting passage of tubular members having smaller outer diameter and the insertion unit, a predetermined degree of flexibility, a predetermined length, and a direction changing unit operative to change an advancing direction in which tubular members having smaller outer diameter and the insertion unit are advanced through the guide channel, the guide member is adapted to be passed through or placed in a pipe,

wherein an observational optical system and an illumination optical system are incorporated in the distal section of the insertion unit,

a flexible tube adjoins the bending section, the flexible tube including a metallic braid and a tube body integrated therewith, and having a smaller outer diameter than the bending section; and

a guide tube having a metallic braid and a tube body integrated therewith and having an outer diameter that is substantially identical to an outer diameter of the bending section mounted on a periphery of the flexible tube included in the insertion unit so that the guide tube can slide freely.

14. (Original) An endoscope system according to claim 13, wherein the insertion unit includes an attaching/detaching means for attaching the flexible tube to the guide tube so that the flexible tube can be freely detached from the guide tube.

15. (Previously Presented) An endoscope system according to claim 14, wherein the attaching/detaching means is an elastic member that comes into close contact with an external surface of a base, which joins the bending section and the flexible tube, with a predetermined holding force.

16. (Previously Presented) An endoscope system according to claim 13, wherein a plurality of bosses having distal portions shaped substantially like a sphere is formed on an external surface of the tube body included in each guide tube and flexible tube.

17. – 28. (Canceled)